

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
IO-13 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 /091 W  
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FM AMCONSUL STUTTGART  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4495  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN  
AMCONSUL BREMEN  
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF  
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT  
AMCONSUL HAMBURG  
AMCONSUL MUNICH  
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE  
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE

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USCINCEUR AND CINCUSAREUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, GW  
SUBJECT: THE FILBINGER AFFAIR

REF: STUTTGART 1364

1. SUMMARY. INTERIOR MINISTER AND CDU LAND CHAIRMAN SPAETH HAS  
SCOTCHED RUMORS MINISTER-PRESIDENT FILBINGER MAY SHORTLY RESIGN.  
SPAETH TELLS US FILBINGER'S RESIGNATION WOULD SPLIT THE LOCAL CDU  
AND BE MORE HARMFUL TO THE PARTY THAN WOULD FILBINGER'S DEPARTURE.  
SPAETH CONCEDES THAT IF FILBINGER WERE TO GO THE CHOICE WOULD BE  
BETWEEN THE "CONSERVATIVE" ROMMEL AND THE "LIBERAL" SPAETH.  
FEDERAL PROSECUTOR REBMANN AND OTHER GERMAN OFFICIALS PRIVATELY  
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EXPRESSED THE VIEW ROMMEL RATHER THAN SPAETH WOULD EVENTUALLY  
SUCCEED FILBINGER AND THEY ALSO FELT FILBINGER SHOULD STEP DOWN  
THOUGH NOT RIGHT AWAY. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 20 LOTHAR SPAETH, BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG  
INTERIOR MINISTER AND DEPUTY LAND CHARMAN OF THE CDU, SCOTCHED  
RUMORS THAT HAVE BEEN MOUNTING IN STUTTGART IN THE PAST FEW DAYS

THAT MINISTER-PRESIDENT FILBINGER IS ABOUT TO RESIGN. SPAETH TOLD THE PRESS THAT SUCH RUMORS WERE PURE SPECULATION. HOWEVER, SPAETH TACITLY CONCEDED THAT THE FILBINGER AFFAIR STILL POSES A PROBLEM IN CDU RANKS WHEN AT THE SAME TIME HE SAID THAT HE HAD CONVENED A MEETING OF ALL CDU DISTRICT (KREIS) LEADERS FOR JULY 27 AT SINDELFINGEN IN ORDER TO RALLY THE PARTY IN SUPPORT OF FILBINGER. (COMMENT: SPAETH APPARENTLY HOPES TO REPEAT HIS PERFORMANCE OF EARLIER THIS WEEK AT LUDWIGSBURG, WHERE HE MET WITH LEADERS OF THE CDU YOUTH MOVEMENT (JUNGE UNION) AND GOT THEM TO REVERSE THEIR PREVIOUS CALL FOR FILBINGER'S RESIGNATION -- SEE REFTEL.)

3. SOME OF THE RUMORS ABOUT FILBINGER HAVE SPECULATED THAT HE MIGHT RESIGN ON THE OCCASION OF THE CDU LAND CONVENTION THIS FALL OR WHEN HE TURNS 65 IN SEPTEMBER. IN A LONG CONVERSATION ON JULY 19, SPAETH TOLD ME THAT AS OF NOW FILBINGER APPEARS TO HAVE NO PLAN TO RESIGN AND THERE WOULD BE NO REASON FOR HIM TO RESIGN ON THE OCCASION OF THE PARTY CONVENTION THIS FALL. IN ADDITION TO BEING MINISTER-PRESIDENT FILBINGER IS ALSO LAND CHAIRMAN OF THE CDU, BUT HIS TWO-YEAR TERM AS LAND CHAIRMAN WILL BE UP FOR RENEWAL ONLY AT THE PARTY CONVENTION IN THE FALL OF 1979. THE PURPOSE OF THE 1978 CONVENTION IS TO DRAW UP THE PARTY PLATFORM IN ANTICIPATION OF THE 1980 LANDTAG ELECTIONS, AND SPAETH WAS CONFIDENT THAT HE, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PLATFORM COMMITTEE, WOULD BE ABLE TO KEEP THINGS UNDER CONTROL AND AVOID ANY EFFORT TO UNSEAT FILBINGER OR, INDEED, ANY DISCUSSION OF THE LAND CHAIRMANSHIP.

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4. SPAETH WAS NOT AT ALL CONVINCED THAT THE BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG CDU WOULD GO ALONG IF THE CDU NATIONAL LEADERSHIP SHOULD DECIDE FOR FILBINGER TO STEP DOWN AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT AT THIS TIME. THE PROBLEM, SAID SPAETH, WAS THAT OUSTING FILBINGER WOULD SPLIT THE CDU IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG, WITH THE RESULT THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER IN THE LONG RUN FOR THE CDU IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG TO CONTINUE TO LIVE WITH FILBINGER AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT, EVEN IF THIS WERE TO RISK SOME DEFECTIONS AMONG THE ELECTORATE IN THE 1980 LANDTAG ELECTIONS, THAN TO FORCE AN INFRA-PARTY CONFRONTATION OVER FILBINGER'S OUSTER. SPAETH ESTIMATED THAT NO MORE THAN 10 - 15 PERCENT OF CDU MEMBERS IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG FELT THAT FILBINGER SHOULD GO, WHEREAS A HARDCORE 20 PERCENT, MAINLY IN SOUTHERN WUERTTEMBERG, FELT THAT FILBINGER HAD DONE NO WRONG AND THEY WOULD LEAVE THE PARTY IF THE PARTY SOUGHT TO OUST FILBINGER AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT. NOR DID SPAETH CLAIM TO BE WORRIED ABOUT CRITICISM OF FILBINGER BY CDU LEADERS FROM OTHER LAENDER (THIS CRITICISM CONTINUES); ON THE CONTRARY, HE FELT THAT THIS MIGHT HAVE THE EFFECT OF RALLYING SUPPORT FOR FILBINGER BY BADEN-WUERTTEMBERGERS RESENTFUL OF OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE IN THEIR AFFAIRS. AFTER ALL, SAID SPAETH, THE CDU ENJOYS A COMFORTABLE MAJORITY IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AND FIRST AND FOREMOST IS GOING TO LOOK AFTER ITS INTERESTS AT HOME. THE CDU (WHICH POLLED 56.7

PERCENT OF THE VOTES IN THE 1976 LANDTAG ELECTIONS) COULD AFFORD TO SLIP BY A FEW PERCENTAGE POINTS, AND HE ALSO DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE FDP COULD BE INVITED TO JOIN IN A LAND COALITION GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD EASILY COMPENSATE FOR ANY ELECTORAL LOSSES THE CDU MIGHT SUFFER BECAUSE OF FILBINGER. SPAETH CLAIMED TO BE ON THE CLOSEST OF TERMS WITH JUERGEN MORLOK, FDP LAND CHAIRMAN AND FRAKTION LEADER IN THE LANDTAG, AND SPAETH FURTHER EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT THE FDP WOULD STILL POLL BETTER THAN 5 PERCENT IN THE 1980 LANDTAG ELECTION REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME OF THE HESSE ELECTION IN OCTOBER AND HOW THE FDP THEN FARED NATIONALLY.

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R 211435Z JUL 78

FM AMCONSUL STUTTGART

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4496

AMEMBASSY BONN

INFO USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

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USCINCEUR AND CINCUSAREUR FOR POLADS

5. I ASKED SPAETH ABOUT HIS OWN AMBITIONS AND ABOUT SPECULATION THAT HE AND ROMMEL SEEMED TO BE THE FRONTFUNKERS TO SUCCEED FILBINGER EVENTUALLY. SPAETH SAID THAT IT WOULD BE UP TO THE PARTY TO DETERMINE DEPENDING ON WHAT KIND OF CANDIDATE IT WANTED -- THE MORE CONSERVATIVE ROMMEL OR A MORE LIBERAL CANDIDATE SUCH AS SPAETH. (COMMENT: WE AND MOST OTHERS WOULD BE MORE INCLINED TO LABEL THE TWO CANDIDATES THE OTHER WAY AROUND. SEE FOLLOWING PARA.) SPAETH SAID THAT FILBINGER HAD ASKED HIM TO BECOME A

MINISTER ON THE GROUNDS THIS WOULD ADVANCE SPAETH'S OWN POLITICAL CAREER. HOWEVER, SAID SPAETH, THIS DID NOT MEAN HE WAS BEHOLDEN TO FILBINGER AND HE SAID HE WOULD RESIGN AT ANY TIME IF HE FELT HE COULD NOT UPHOLD FILBINGER'S POLICIES OR, HE ADDED, AS PROTEST IF HE FELT AT ANY MOMENT THAT FILBINGER SHOULD HAVE RESIGNED.

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6. INDICATIVE OF SOME OF THE LOCAL SENTIMENT SURROUNDING THE FILBINGER AFFAIR WAS THE CONVERSATION AT A LUNCHEON WE ATTENDED JULY 20 WITH DR. REBMANN, FEDERAL PROSECUTOR; STUEMPE, ONE OF SPAETH'S TOP ASSISTANTS AT THE INTERIOR MINISTRY; AND OTHER KEY FIGURES IN LOCAL SECURITY CIRCLES. THE CONSENSUS AMONG THE GERMAN GUESTS WAS THAT ROMMEL WAS CERTAINLY THE BEST CANDIDATE THE CDU COULD PUT FORWARD TO SUCCEED FILBINGER; ROMMEL WAS POPULAR AND HAD MORE CHARISMA THAN DID SPAETH AND SPAETH'S POPULAR IMAGE PERHAPS ALSO SUFFERED FOR HIS PRESENT ROLE AS INTERIOR MINISTER AND HIS IDENTIFICATION WITH THE POLICE. THE CONSENSUS FURTHER WAS THAT FILBINGER PROBABLY SHOULD STEP DOWN, BUT ONLY AFTER A DECENT INTERVAL WHEN HE COULD DEPART GRACEFULLY. THE POSSIBILITY WAS NOT RULED OUT THAT AN INTERIM MINISTER-PRESIDENT WOULD BE NAMED UNTIL ROMMEL COULD BE ELECTED TO A FULL TERM IN 1980. THESE OFFICIALS ALSO TENDED TO CONFIRM SPAETH'S REASONING REGARDING RESENTMENT OF BADEN-WUERTTEMBERGERS TO OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE (PARA 4 ABOVE); THEY WERE SOMEWHAT SCORNFUL OF ADVICE BEING GIVEN TO THE STRONG BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG CDU BY CDU LEADERS ELSEWHERE FROM WHAT WERE OFTEN LESS SOLID POWER BASES.

7. COMMENT: IT WILL BE CLEARER AFTER THE JULY 27 MEETING AT SINDELFINGEN WHETHER SPAETH'S CONTROL OVER THE LAND CDU IS AS STRONG AS HE SEEMS TO THINK IT IS AND WHETHER THE PARTY WILL IN FACT CONTINUE TO RALLY ROUND TO PREVENT A DISASTROUS SPLIT IN ITS RANKS OVER FILBINGER. IT MAY BE THAT FILBINGER HIMSELF COULD BE INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING ABOUT A COMPROMISE, IF IT COMES TO THAT, BY OFFERING, FOR EXAMPLE, TO STEP DOWN -- AS PARTY CHAIRMAN, AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT, OR AS BOTH -- AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE IN EXCHANGE FOR A LITTLE QUIET FROM THE PARTY NOW. SPAETH'S THREAT TO RESIGN SHOULD HE COME TO FEEL THAT HE COULD NO LONGER SERVE UNDER FILBINGER SUGGESTS THAT EVEN SPAETH, HOWEVER, MAY BE BRACING

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HIMSELF IN CASE EVEN MORE SURPRISES ARE FORTHCOMING IN THE FILBINGER AFFAIR, WHICH HAS ALREADY HAD SO MANY UPS AND DOWNS.

MILLER

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## Message Attributes

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